Depending on the State or Plodding along in Misery

Myths of the Artistic Field in Nineteenth Century France Unravelled

Dani Cuypers Studies into the French art world of the nineteenth century are often based upon preconceptions. The most notorious one is that the art world was dominated by the Académie des Beaux-Arts and its famous Salons. Their role is supposed to have been gradually taken over by art dealers and critics. However, more insight is gained by putting the accent on continuity, rather than on disruption and on the totality of the art world, rather than on a fragment.

Our current view of the workings of the French nineteenth-century artistic field is still largely based on Harrison and Cynthia White's *Canvases and Careers*, an epoch-making book that was first published in 1965. In this book, the Whites postulate the existence of an academic system ruling the artistic world, which, under demographic pressure, gradually gave way to a dealer-critic system that, was definitively established by the end of the century. The White's model of change is thus two-dimensional. The same holds true for Pierre Bourdieu's account of the autonomization of the artistic field, which is actually greatly indebted to the White's theory.[1] For hosts of researchers this dualistic train of thought on the organization of the French art world has become the only possible way of perceiving and explaining the changes that occurred roughly between 1850 and 1900 (for example Adang en Van Steenderen 1999). The argument usually takes a long, nondescript period of stagnation as its starting point, governed by a heterono-mous, academic system - though the terminology may be different. What follows is an implosion of the system due to its inability to provide a livelihood for all aspiring artists. The ensuing changes conveniently appear in almost exact congruence with the emergence of new so-called modernist art styles. In Bourdieu's vision, for instance, modernism and an intentional striving towards autonomy of the field acquire synonymity.

In this essay it is argued that nothing points to an exclusive correlation between the new art forms emerging after 1850 and the workings of the artistic field[2] at the time. On the contrary, though changes were indeed numerous during the period, rather than being the privilege of groups of artists operating in the margin, they were the effect of on-going developments within the art world itself and they were of consequence to all participants in the field, whether or not of modernist cast. The main problem resides in a series of preconceptions about the organization of the art world before the middle of the nineteenth century: the first part of this essay is therefore devoted to an analysis of some of those preconceptions and aims at elucidating the structure of the artistic field around 1850. It proposes a wider, more symbiotic view of the interaction of the different parties involved in the production and distribution of art. It also tries to demonstrate that our perception of the nineteenth-century art world gains more nuance and allows for more differentiation by putting an accent on continuity rather than on disruption, and by studying the totality of the market rather than a fragment of it - a selection that is more often than not the result of aesthetic biases. On the whole the approach pleads for a stronger orientation towards the economics of art.

After a sketch of the structure of the field, this essay will focus on art criticism. Criticism will be assigned a place at the heart of the art business in the belief that its functioning clarifies the interdependence of all the parties involved in the field. The mechanisms at work will finally be illustrated by the example of the early career of the painter Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), and some other short cases.

In spite of all the ambitious statements above, it would be wrong to expect a ready-made encompassing revision of the workings of the art world and art criticism. This essay consists only of some preliminary notes on the issues at stake and points out some paths that could be taken in a search for a more realistic historical, economic and perhaps even sociological approach to the theme of art criticism and its institutional context.

The Académie des Beaux-Arts and the State

One of the flaws in the conceptions of the Whites and all those in their wake is that the workings of the artistic field before the last quarter of the nineteenth century are reduced to one institution, the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Its members are assigned the complicated task of being producers of works of art, as well as distributors of the totality of the artistic production. Furthermore, they are considered to produce the symbolic value in art, for they were seen as the ultimate consecrating power in the field. In other words, the Académie is supposed to have possessed no less than an absolute monopoly in artistic matters. In fact, the Académie's role is vastly overestimated in these concepts.

From 1816 onwards, in its new design after the revolutionary and Napoleonic upheavals, the total sum of its professional members was set at no more than 40, a number that included musicians, architects and engravers, as well as sculptors and painters (Zehrfuss 1995, 305, 310-311). Considering the size of the ever-increasing artistic population in France, they formed a very small minority (Sfeir-Semler 1992, 44-47; White & White 1995, 59-69, 92-93; Heinich 2000, 4-5). The Académie's main function, as formulated in 1816, was to advise the government in all matters concerning the arts (Vaisse 1995, 92). The State could delegate tasks to the Académie, but each of the many successive regimes in nineteenth-century France gave a different interpretation to that option. One of the problems the regimes encountered with the staff of the Académie was that its members were chosen by co-optation and for life. This meant that the learned body of the Académie often survived various regimes, and that its majority frequently found itself in opposition to the current constitution. Though subsidized through one of the budgets of the

State, there were serious conflicts, for instance on the occasion of the Salon.

The Salon was the pivotal event in nineteenth century artistic life.[3] One could compare this annual, sometimes biennial exhibition[4] that lasted for some weeks, to the vast contemporary art fairs that are held nowadays, at least with regard to its economic importance. There is one major difference, though. Whereas now the supply of goods is provided by dealers - who pay for participation to the fair - participation to the Salon was free to all artists and they submitted their work themselves. Regarding its representative function, it shared a lot of its characteristics with contemporary venues like the biennials of Venice and Sao Paolo, where artists are chosen by the government or a governmental institution to be worthy representatives of the state of contemporary art in their own country. The character of the Salon was thus hybrid, serving both as a showcase for prestigious history painting that resulted from government commissions, and as a bazaar - due to its mercantile nature. This dual character was often commented upon by contemporaries (e.g. Mainardi 1989; Vaisse 1995, 104-106). It is important to keep in mind that the Salon was organized by a State service and not by the Académie itself as is often maintained.[5] The most tremendous aspect of the Salon was its size, growing from a presentation of 794 works by 255 artists in 1791, to 2,371 works by 790 artists in 1824, expanding to a culmination of 7,289 works by 5,128 artists in 1880 (Sfeir-Semler 1992, 40-43).

The jury of the Salon functioned as a gatekeeper, in order to keep the size of the Salon within reasonable bounds (Rosenthal 1987, 38-47; Sfeir-Semler 1992, 115-149; Chaudonneret 1999, 57-68). The constitution of the jury was fiercely debated, though all parties concerned agreed that a jury was absolutely necessary. Under all the French nineteenth-century regimes, the responsible civil servants experimented with the number of members of the jury and their affiliation, and the question of whether the jury should be chosen - or partly chosen - and by whom. One regime, however, kept it simple and probably wisely so, because no solution to the jury-problem was ever found that gave satisfaction to all concerned. Under the July Monarchy, from 1830 to 1847, the jury was entirely staffed by the Académie des Beaux-Arts. During that period different State services quite regularly charged artists with large commissions, while those same artists were just as regularly refused to exhibit by the jury. Moreover, several of the *académiciens* refused, over time, to take their seats in the jury. Some, for instance, because they thought the idea of an appointed academic jury was unjust, and preferred an elected one, others because their favourite pupils were refused. By 1847, all the most reputed artists had left the jury, leaving a few die-hard, growingly unpopular, *académiciens* to the task. Incidents like these demonstrate that the Académie des Beaux-Arts was far less a coherent unity than is often maintained.

The Académie's role in the artistic field should be considered separately from that of the State: both regularly acted as antagonistic forces upon each other. When talking about the State one should also realize that its activities in the art world were scattered over different ministries and departments, involving different budgets and different functionaries whose interests were not necessarily geared to one another.[6] Even contemporaries were not always quite sure whom to address, or whom to blame for that matter (Vaisse 1995, 320-321).

Art dealers and auction houses

There were other parties besides the State and the Académie on the market and, though the Salon was definitely the place where reputations were made, there are some obvious signs that sophisticated methods for marketing contemporary art were well developed during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1835 there appeared an anonymous article on the trade in art objects in the specialized journal *l'Artiste* (Vaisse 1983). The text gives a detailed analysis of the problems and flaws of a dealer system as experienced by artists, but concludes with a positive evaluation of the system: being seen in a dealer's window would, in the end, be more profitable than participating in the Salon and getting a share of the press coverage of that event. Several dealers are mentioned (Giroux, Susse and Durand-Ruel) and their *étalages* praised. A relatively young artist such as Alexandre-Gabriël Decamps (1803-1860) is said to have enjoyed successes - thanks to dealers and the gulf of speculation their trade provoked. Such an analysis of art dealing could not have been made if dealing was of little significance. It is often claimed that artists in France during the first half of the nineteenth century had hardly any alternative than either depending on the State, or plodding along in misery.[7] This claim is clearly contradicted by, for example, the careers of numerous genre-painters, like those of Decamps and Meissonier, to name only two famous ones.[8]

Secondary literature on art dealing in France before the era of Impressionism is scant,[9] which can at least partly be explained by the widespread assumption that it did not exist, or if it did, only on a very small scale. In a yearbook for artists published in 1861 the task was undertaken to list addresses 'useful to artists and amateurs' (Lacroix 1861, 59-66). The addresses were neatly categorized under 7 different labels: marchands de tableaux (105); experts en tableaux (42); éditeurs et marchands d'estampes (133); marchands de curiosités, objets d'art, médailles, etc. (157); antiquaires (32); encadrements d'estampes, tableaux et pastels (63); mouleurs-figuristes (48). Quite an astonishing degree of specialization for a market that is supposed to have been only just developing. One would almost suspect the compiler could be accused of excessive taxonomic zeal. To be sure, the categories showed some overlapping, but amazingly little. Goupil, of course, was listed under the dealers in paintings as well as under the dealers in reproductions, as was Beugniet:[10] both are still well known for the shrewd way in which they managed to link their reproductive activities with dealing in originals (Lafont-Couturier 1996; Verhoogt 1999). The trade in which the 105 listed *marchands de tableaux* were involved will certainly not have been confined to contemporary masters, but lists such as the one presented offer ample food for thought on the organization of the art world at the time.[11]

There is yet another phenomenon that is easily overlooked when one assumes that the artistic field was dominated by an academic system: auction houses were thriving on the primary market for contemporary art (when products are sold for the first time), as well as on the secondary market.[12] During the 1840s at the latest, this part of the art world was well developed. Auctioning took place in luxurious surroundings and was arranged by houses specialized in *objets d'art*.[13] As far as individual members of the Académie were concerned, Paul Delaroche (1797-1856), Horace Vernet (1789-1863), and even Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) were known to be very keen on guarding their commercial interests.[14] These interests lay not only in the advantageous sale of their work, but also in the control of the quality of reproduction, the reproduction rights and the distribution - through dealers via market mechanisms - of those same works. For the reproduction trade was a lucrative business, and successful sales could greatly boost the

reputation of an artist, whether of academic stock or not.

The artistic field as a market: symbiosis

Rather than being ruled by a uniform academic system, the French nineteenth century art world was a diverse and dynamic entity. True, the Académie des Beaux-Arts was important and its members were revered, but it was much less static and not as powerful as is implied by the term 'academic system'. When considering the whole of the artistic field at the time, it would be more constructive to speak of a market rather than a system. This market-concept points more effectively to most of the shifts that took place, of which the most significant is the development from one, central market to a variety of markets and sub-markets, international, national and even regional. Or, to put it in other words, from a single art world to art worlds (Becker 1984). Part of that one market, with the huge Salon as its emblem, was the Académie, whose members acted mainly as producers, sometimes as representatives, and every now and then as mediators in the artistic field. A segment of the artists' education was also in their hands, through the Académie's de facto control of the École des Beaux-Arts.[15] Another party was the State. One department acted as distributor - being the organizer of the Salon - and also as mediator, sanctifying reputations with the distribution of medals and honorary titles in the *Légion d'honneur*. Several other departments acted as consumers, commissioning or acquiring works of art. As consumers the different State departments had to compete on the market just as private collectors or dealers because, as early as 1824, there are documented cases of officials urging their superiors to take swift decisions and still seeing important works of art slipping through their fingers because a private party had made its move more quickly (Fraser 1998, 93). Generally speaking, the State's actions were often fragmented and badly co-ordinated.[16]

A third party on the art market was formed by a specialized branch of commercial distributors, operating at a much earlier date than *is often assumed*. One could even conjecture that the decisive stimulus for these dealers in art and reproductions to specialize into genres and styles, to take artists under contract, to systematically organize one-man and group exhibitions was the State's decision in 1880 to devolve the organization of the *Salon* to a society of artists. Thus government regulation provoked that shift and not the other way around, as is often assumed. *Académiciens* took advantage of what these commercial distributors offered in ways similar to those of their less eminent colleagues. One could conceive of the one central market in nineteenth-century Paris as being a symbiosis of different parties - opposing, but more often supplementing one another in ever-shifting balances. Their respective roles in the economy of visual art were not as clear-cut as one would perhaps wish them to be but, in order to obtain a better grasp of the workings of the artistic field - then, as now - the Utopia of twofold systems - the academic versus the dealer-critic system - is best abandoned.

Circles of recognition: the place of art criticism

An important role in the art world was fulfilled by a wide range of critics. Art criticism is understood here as the total collection of published reviews of contemporary art exhibitions, art critics thus being the writers of those reviews and acting as brokers in information on art. There is a general tendency to take the existence of art criticism before the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a matter-of-course. At best, it is considered as an intermediary institution between artist and public, but there is little interest in its aim, functions and methods.[17] The explanation often provided for the emergence of art criticism in the eighteenth century is indebted to Harrison and Cynthia White. Art had simply come to be considered one of the distinguished subjects to which an *honnête homme* should apply himself and about which he should be able to discourse (White & White, 1995, 32-33). So, apart from being a medium for showing off knowledge and wit, art criticism basically had no function in itself. This interpretation does not elucidate the extraordinary bloom of art criticism during the early nineteenth century (McWilliam 1991a; McWilliam, Schuster & Wrigley 1991), nor the importance artists attached to the judgments of art critics. Letters of thanks from artists to critics are numerous. See, for instance, the letters addressed to Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) by Ingres, Delacroix, Laemlein, Lehmann, Simart on the occasion of the World Exhibition of 1855 (Gautier 1991, 165, 168, 176-178, 186). Solicitations for a critic's attention presumably even outnumber the letters of gratitude. A famous example is the letter Courbet addressed to Gautier in 1846 (Courbet 1996, 60-61). Numerous artists retired from exhibiting at the *Salon* after having been fiercely attacked by critics. Well-known examples are Ingres after 1834, Delaroche after 1836 and Couture after 1855 (Vaisse 1995, 106, 353-354 n.76).

The image of 'circles of recognition' (Bowness 1989) is a helpful instrument in order to gain some insight into the specific role of art critics within the range of art specialists and connoisseurs involved in the symbolic production of art. Surely it is impossible to make clear-cut distinctions between the different segments contributing to the quality assessment of contemporary art, because the degree of professionalization was often still low and participants frequently performed several different roles on the market.[18] The sole purpose of this exercise is to highlight the specificity of the task of art critics.

The first and perhaps most important group of professional connoisseurs is that of the artists themselves. As the saying goes: 'It takes an artist to recognize one'. Masters and fellow students are instrumental in the discovery of artistic potential, which is one of the reasons why institutions such as the Académie work on the basis of co-optation, or mutual acknowledgement of their members.[19] 'Circles of recognition' expand outwards from the master's studio,[20] until the point where an aspiring artist turns into a dangerous competitor to his fellow students, and to his master, although the success of a pupil also usually contributes to the good name of the master. Much of the future of an artist depends on the efforts his master is willing to make on his behalf, and the network of connections with which he is able to provide him. The introduction to connections of fellow students can also be of vital importance. In nineteenth-century France, the master's position in the artistic field was probably a major determinant for the ease with which the works of a pupil would be accepted for a first exhibition at the Salon (Sfeir-Semler 1992, 287-290). However, no master would support his pupils endlessly, if only from the point of view of competition. Therefore, it must be concluded that quality judgments provided by painters on the art works of colleagues and (former) pupils could be questionable. The greater the similarity in genre between the artist judging and the artist under judgment, the less reliable they probably became.

Institutional indicators of quality, such as grand collections or museums, could provide additional information, but only for somewhat older works. Another institution, the

Académie, is often presumed to have performed the role of ultimate authority in artistic quality in nineteenth-century France.[21] Since the members of the Académie were also artists, they were likely to be as prone to considerations of competition as any of their less eminent colleagues.

Obviously, there was room for a category of learned but independent outsiders, without any direct interest in the financial and artistic well-being of the artist, but with a deep-rooted concern for its own prolonged credibility as a class of connoisseurs. To maintain that position, such connoisseurs had to be well-informed at all times on the debuts of new artists and the evolution of older masters, on general tendencies in the art world and prevailing fashions and tastes. Then as now, this was a labour-intensive activity, but the possibility of capitalizing on this kind of information formed a major incentive. These connoisseurs could, among other things, become dealers, valuation experts, or art critics. The famous art critic Théophile Thoré, (1807-1869), for instance, became associated with the bibliophile Paul Lacroix in 1842, to set up a specialized agency. The expertise of this agency was to judge, sell and exchange pictures and books (McWilliam 1991b, 23; Rosenthal 1987, 61; Sfeir-Semler 1992, 191).[22] To promote their enterprise they published a bulletin, which existed until 1848 when, during the revolutionary upheaval, Thoré decided to take his chances in politics. During the same period, before 1848, Thoré reviewed every Salon in one of the national newspapers and in various other publications (McWilliam 1991a). His case offers us a glimpse of a complex of actions, interactions and conflicts of interest that, in most simplified accounts of the pre-1850 French art world, is not supposed to have existed at the time. Yet further research would probably reveal that Thoré's behaviour was not all that unique.

Next to the free-market segment of critics, experts and dealers, there was a further, administrative segment of specialist civil servants who also acted as art-information brokers. This segment consisted mostly of museum directors and curators, functionaries of the different ministries, prefectures and municipalities, chairs and members of governmental art committees, and the *inspecteurs des beaux-arts*. Lastly, there was also a mixed segment of professionals and amateurs who met in an ever-growing number of art societies.

Each of these different sorts of art-specialists performed a role as gatekeepers in one of the consecutive circles of recognition through which an artist travelled on his way to (eventual) fame. Rather than constituting a negligible, amateurish segment of the art world, it seems that there was room for art critics to have played a key role: their contribution to the cycle of recognition often lay the basis for the actions of the other (non-artist) gatekeepers.

The making of an artist: Gérôme

The well-documented case of the painter Gérôme - born in 1824 - is a good example to illustrate the proposed more economically-oriented approach of the art world, including art criticism and its function in the field. In 1846 Gérôme entered the *Prix de Rome* competition, which was organized by the École des Beaux-Arts and was generally considered as a crucial step when striving towards a career as a history painter. Gérôme was not an outsider trying to gain access to the *École*: he had been a pupil of and an assistant to the *académicien* Delaroche, before he closed down his Parisian studio and the painter Charles Gleyre (1806-1874) took over most of his pupils (Ackerman 2000, 16-26; Exh. cat. Nantes 1995, 393; Harding 1979, 113). Gérôme was turned down after the second test because of his defective style in making figures (Ackerman 2000, 28). Thanks to the recommendation of his master Gleyre, he was commissioned to make some copies of famous pictures, which was the State service form of welfare programme for artists for whom help was solicited (Ackerman 2000, 27). The first circle of recognition had formed itself around Gérôme: that of his masters and fellow pupils.[23]

Gérôme made his debut at the Salon of 1847. His works remained unheeded until the critic Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) noticed Gérôme's *Combat des Coqs* (now Paris, Musée d'Orsay) and published an enthusiastic, exultant review on it in one of the most prominent newspapers of the time, *La Presse* (March 31, 1847) (Gautier 1997, 25-29). Gautier had served that paper as a theatre and art critic for more than ten years and, by 1847, was considered to be one of the most authoritative critics.[24] After Gautier's piece on Gérôme had appeared, others went to have a peep at the Gérôme and hurried to publish their account of the painting. Gautier's discovery was such a success that his praise of the painting was reprinted in two other magazines, among which *l'Artiste*, then the leading arts periodical (June 6, 1847) (Spoelberch de Lovenjoul 1968). A clearer case of orchestration would probably be difficult to find. The determining factor was probably Gautier's leading position within art criticism. With this step Gérôme entered the next circle of recognition, that of the brokers in information on art - commonly called art critics.[25]

Gérôme's *Combat des Coqs* of 1847 was bought by a Mr. Roux-Labourie, whose widow sold it to the art dealer Goupil, 25 years later, in 1872. Goupil passed it on to the French State in the same year, making a profit of 25% (Ackerman 2000, 212).[26] In 1848 the arts department of the new Second Republic moved somewhat faster to buy one of Gérôme's works, which was sent to the museum in Toulouse; another was acquired by the dealer Tedesco. The Salon of 1850 brought another acquisition by the State, sent to the museum in Bordeaux this time, and one by the nephew of the president of the Republic, prince Napoleon (Ackerman 2000, 214-218). Supported by Gautier's ongoing praises, Gérôme solicited commissions from several government institutions (Ackerman 2000, 34-39). Some smaller ones came in but by 1852, with the 1855 Universal Exposition in mind, Gérôme was given the opportunity of painting a canvas to his liking for which 20,000 francs would be paid. The result, *Le Siècle d'Auguste* (now Amiens, Musée de Picardie), the largest painting made in the nineteenth century, was not a very happy one.[27] However, Gautier again exhausted himself finding recommendations, and the work got extensive reviews by all the critics.[28] The deed was done: Gérôme, in the minds of his contemporaries, was definitely taken up in the pantheon of art, sanctioned by an honourable commission from the State and made *chevalier de la Légion d'honneur*. Gérôme returned to making smaller genre scenes and, by 1860, his work had become far too expensive for any State service to buy (Ackerman 2000, 36). Even though his style had been judged defective twenty years earlier, he was elected to become a member of the Académie in 1865.

What is significant is that Gérôme's career started only through the lucky chance of an established, inquisitive art critic whose eye fell on his work.[29] What followed was a rush for his work by private persons and dealers; State departments were somewhat hesitant, but the task fell to them to crown the work. After the art dealers, the State can be seen here as the next, institutional, circle of recognition that eventually sanctioned the selections made by the market. Though unusual in the speed at which events took place, Gérôme's example

illustrates the essential role of art criticism as a gatekeeper in the artistic field. And, what is more, with a *coup* like that of Gautier, an art critic reinforced his position as a leader on the market for art criticism. The backlash of a *coup* like that could be that a critic had to stay true to his choices in order to keep his credibility, although he could have placed his bet on the wrong horse - which is what almost happened when Gérôme failed to produce a satisfactory result with his 1855 commission. In this specific case, the fact that Gérôme exposed other works more in agreement with his earlier, highly successful production and the fact that Gautier did not receive any serious opposition from other art critics, prevented this from happening.

Delacroix and Decamps

Gérôme's case is not a blueprint for the impact of the statements of an art critic on the different stages of an artistic career. Art critics, however, could be instrumental in the careers of artists in various ways. For instance, the role of Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877) in the subsequent phases of Eugène Delacroix's (1798-1863) career springs to mind.[30] Thiers started out as an art critic, defending, amongst others, the young Delacroix. Thiers' Salons of the 1820s acquired some reputation. He moved on to political journalism and played a crucial role in the rousing of public sentiment, which ultimately led to the revolution of July 1830. Thiers' reward for his dedication to the cause of Louis-Philippe, was a brilliant political career with several ministerial offices. Delacroix received his most gratifying commissions for huge decorative projects through the efforts of Thiers, who found himself either in control of artistic affairs or able to exert considerable influence over them.

One of the problems encountered when trying to devise a means of measuring or even analysing the impact of art criticism on artistic careers in the past is that almost no data is readily available, either on the artists or on the critics - with the exception of a few very well-known cases. The earliest years of a genre-painter such as Decamps (1803-1860), whose work enjoyed tremendous recognition from the 1830s onwards, are still shrouded in mystery (Exh. cat. Nantes 1995, 362-363; Mosby 1977, 30-55). After having spent a short time in a master's studio, Decamps went on to work entirely on his own. During this period he already sold paintings, prints and drawings, without ever having exhibited at the Salon. How that came about and in what way his brother, among other things active as an art critic (Mosby 1977, 27), influenced the rise of Decamps' star, are intriguing questions for anyone trying to discover some method - if any - in the workings of art criticism. Notable in Decamps' starting years is that, just as in the case of Gérôme, the State acknowledged his talent with a first medal in 1831, only after he had been commercially successful and had participated at several exhibitions, starting from 1827 onwards. In other words, it seems as though the mechanism whereby the State sanctioned the choice of the market, after an artist had proved his worth and been accepted, was a regular occurrence. Maybe one could go as far as to claim that, with regard to the professional circles of recognition, the State - or rather one or more of its various services - closed the cycle in the making of an artist.

Continuity instead of disruption

In the current stage of research into the organization of the artistic field in the past, it is more important to keep the continuity in mind than to accentuate breaking points. Organizations, institutions and the like do change, as does the nature of their interaction, but they change gradually and, what is more, they do not have the convenience of changing along neat, linear or oppositional models. The idea that stylistic changes and institutional changes are necessarily concomitant is erroneous: there is no denying that they have an impact on each other but, certainly in the case of nineteenth-century art, new styles did not provoke new market mechanisms. These artists hitched a ride with an on-going development, as did most of the artists at the time, independent of their style or genre.

The core of the infrastructure of the nineteenth-century French art world was formed by the Salon, which acquired its central position through government regulation. Before the revolution of 1789, participation in the Salon had been a royal privilege granted exclusively to the members of the Académie Royale des beaux-arts. Yet, in 1791, in the aftermath of the issuing of the law on the abolishment of guilds and corporations, the Assemblée decided that, from then on, the organization of the Salon would be a matter of State and that all artists were free to participate. During the first few years, the dissociation from the honourable elite of the Académie proved to be not altogether beneficial (Halliday 1998), but with the advent of Napoleon and his campaign of personal glorification through large, spectacular pictures, the Salon revived in a hybrid but fruitful merger of its old monarchical function and its new role as a democratic institution. From the moment that the right to submit works for exhibition was granted to all, the Salon openly gained a commercial function.

How non-academic artists marketed their works before the revolution is difficult to tell, although some channels are known to have existed (Wrigley 1993, 12-39; Heinich 1993, 71-76). The problem is that, as with the nineteenth century, the merchant economy of the eighteenth century has never been a favourite topic among historians: studies on the subject are scarce (Sargentson 1996, introd.). Apart from annual fairs, the main infrastructure for the marketing of small, cheap paintings such as landscapes, still-lifes, flower paintings and - above all - portraits, must have been the shop we know so well from medieval representations. Artists, *académiens* as well as non-*académiciens*, could also rely on (semi)-professional middlemen and dealers, of which some are known by name, such as Gersaint and Mariette,[31] although the proportional relationship of their activities on the market for contemporary art on the one hand and on the market for old masters on the other is still an issue of debate. Speculation on future increases in the value of contemporary works of art certainly existed before the revolution, but to what extent is again unknown.[32] Middlemen and merchants and speculative investment in (contemporary) art disappeared overnight with the advent of the revolution and the subsequent institutional rearrangements. It is important to acknowledge that the kind of merchant economy that could make the art trade thrive was already well-organized in the eighteenth century and that established firms survived the turmoil into the new century. What happened as a direct consequence of abolishing the professional corporations and opening the Salon was that the entire art market became structured around one specific event, the Salon - from then on state-sponsored. This situation lasted well into the twentieth century, despite the fact that the French State cast off the organization of the Salon in 1880, and that rival Salons were established. For, by then, the artistic demographics had exploded dramatically and trends towards greater diversification of the market had necessarily set in to allow artist and customer to find one another.

Extensive, systematic research is needed on

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the totality of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century art market, on the careers of artists and art critics, for what has generally been interpreted as the exception may prove to have been the rule for a much longer period than is usually presumed. For instance, career patterns of stylistically utterly dissimilar artists would, in my opinion, show a great deal of similarity. One should also take care not to place too much importance on institutions such as the Académie des Beaux-Arts, basing oneself simply on the battle cries of those few nineteenth-century critics who have been studied during the twentieth century. The State's multi-faceted involvement in the arts deserves a more meticulous unravelling, particularly in relation to its own institutions. Finally, the mercantile aspects of the art business and the people that were involved in it desperately need to be taken seriously. The symbolic production of visual art in early nineteenth-century France followed paths that were not fundamentally different from those followed later on: it was primarily an economic process. It is high time for the demystification of the nineteenth-century art world and, while we are at it, why not include the eighteenth century as well.

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Noten

1. Bourdieu extended the process of change the White's described to an interaction between the literary and artistic fields in order to achieve a more or less homologous model of both fields (1994 and 1996, 131-137).
2. The Bourdivian notion of the field (1993 and 1996), the notion of art world(s) as conceived by Becker (1984), and the system of system-theoretical approaches (Schmidt 1989 and 1996) are purposely used here as interchangeable concepts. For an example of the problems with the application of the Bourdivian literary field to historical situations: Saint-Jacques & Viala 1994.
3. The most comprehensive survey of the Salon and its functions can be found in Sfeir-Semler 1992, 25-74.
4. A total of 48 state-organized Salons were held over a period of 65 years, that is between 1815 and 1880 (Sfeir-Semler 1992, 54-56).
5. The organization was in the hands of the fine arts department, attached to a *ministère d'État* or to a ministry of the house of the ruler of the moment - king or emperor (Sfeir-Semler 1992, 34-39; Vaisse 1995, 33).
6. For a survey see, for example, the 'Renseignements officiels' in Lacroix 1860, 1-29.
7. Formulated as a characteristic of the *academic* system by White & White in 1965, this idea has been repeated endlessly, and notably by Bourdieu 1994 and Heinich 2000, 5.
8. On the income of artists in general: Sfeir-Semler 1992, 422-440. For Meissonier: Sfeir-Semler 1992, 337-338, 431-432. Remarks on Decamps' earnings are scattered throughout Mosby (1977).
9. With the exception of Whiteley (1983) and Green (1987 and 1989). Green postulates a 'caesura' in the organization of the art market around 1850 whereas, in my opinion, continuity should be stressed and the tendency towards specialization should be interpreted as an ongoing process.
10. For fairly reliable biographical information on the less well known art dealers, see the successive editions of Vapereau's biographical dictionaries (1858 etc.).
11. Whiteley (1983) mentioned 14 houses that were founded in the 1820s. Four of them still existed in 1861: Asse, Binant, Goupil and Durand-Ruel, as did the houses of Deforge, Beugniet and Détrimont, established in the 1830s and 1840s.
12. Many thanks to Olav Velthuis, who pointed out the distinction between markets to me.
13. See, for instance, the account given by F.M. (1847) specifically p.72 on the distinction between ordinary *salles de vente* and the more aristocratic succursals 'affectées aux ventes de tableaux et d'objects d'art'. Green sketches these developments as taking place only 10 to 20 years later (Green 1987, 62-65; Green 1989, 32).
14. Horace Vernet pleaded fiercely as early as 1841 for the copyrights of artists= creations, and stated their commercial interests in a way that cannot be misunderstood (Vernet 1862).
15. In contrast to most of the other continental and British art schools instituted by Academies, the French École des Beaux-Arts did not offer a full training programme for future artists, but was rather a *machine à concours*: an institutional organizer of competitions for the Prix de Rome. The only real instruction that was dispensed at the École before 1863 was a drawing course.
16. A distinction should also be made between the private operations on the art market of the rulers of the moment and their families, and those that were carried out in the name of the French State.
17. Even Wrigley (1995) in his vast panorama of early art criticism is far more interested in the symbolic connotations of the art-critical discourse than in its primary functions.
18. Part of my forthcoming dissertation will be devoted to the job opportunities and career patterns of art critics.
19. Up to a certain point the following should also be applicable to a guild system.
20. Or several subsequential masters, as was normal practice. If the artistic education is received in the context of an art school or an academy, the same basic principle applies. Even in the case when an aspirant-artist did not receive any formal artistic training or started as an amateur, it was always a professional artist who played a crucial role in his acceptance as a member of the profession.
21. The individual production of members of the *Académie* was not limited to history painting. The discrepancy between individual standards and the preference for historical painting that the *Académie* is always said to have propagated (Vaisse 1995, 72-73) deserves to be investigated.
22. Jowell (1996, 118) maintains that Thoré was involved in the firm for a short period of time only and would have concentrated on his art criticism for *Le Constitutionnel* during the years before the revolution. Thoré, however, could never have earned enough to live solely by his pen and there is no indication whatsoever that he would have put a stop to his commercial activities only to take them up again in the eighteen fifties and sixties. See also: Sartorius 1995, 40; Thoré 1900.
23. The support group of fellow artists was very close in Gérôme's case: from 1847 on they even lived in a commune. Gautier baptised the group as the *Néo-Grecs* or *Pompéistes*, with Gérôme as their acknowledged leader (Ackerman 1990).
24. Quite a lot has been published on Gautier's art criticism, for example: Drost 1992, Girard 1994, Guégan 1993, Guégan & Yon 1997, s.e./*Actes colloque* 1982, Snell 1982, Spencer 1969.
25. A winner of the Prix de Rome competition would also have reaped press coverage, though certainly not as extensively as in the example of Gérôme. The problem these artists faced was that, after winning their prize, they were sent off to Rome for four years and more or less lost contact with the French art world.
26. Artists also capitalized on successes: at least one replica and two reductions were produced of the *Combat* by Gérôme or his atelier (Ackerman 2000, 212-214, cat. 15, 15-2 & 15.3).
27. Even Gérôme himself acknowledged its failure (Gérôme 1980, 9-11).
28. The lists of critics are too long to sum up. The criticism of *Le Siècle d'Auguste* and the dynamics of the interactions between critics will be extensively treated in my forthcoming dissertation.
29. There is no reason to doubt the assertion of both men that they did not know each other before Gautier's first assessment of the *Combat des Coqs* appeared (Ackerman 2000, 28-29).
30. With thanks to Marijke Jonker who drew my attention to the intricate relation between both men.
31. One must not forget that the corporations organized not only the trades, but also their commerce. Though she does not address the category of products we call 'art', Sargentson (1996) offers a clear insight into the mechanisms of luxury trade in the eighteenth century and the sophisticated methods the *marchands merciers* developed to dispose of their goods.
32. Wrigley 1993, 26; Vaisse 1995, 14. For an example in 1675: Heinich 1993, 55-56.

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